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ABSTRACT

The National Literacy Act of 1991 provided the funding to begin building an adult literacy staff development infrastructure by requiring all states to increase their staff development funding from 10% to 15%. Inquiry-based staff development was one of the most promising models to emerge from the staff development activities conducted in 1992-1993 as a result of the act's passage. Inquiry-based staff development evolved in response to identified needs such as the following: the need for a critical perspective, the need to problematize the knowledge base in adult literacy, the need for staff development to be practiced as an ongoing process, and the need to focus on program improvement. Among the steps involved in inquiry-based staff development are the following: reflecting on practice, gathering information, studying the information through analysis, planning actions to be taken, implementing the action plan, monitoring and evaluating results, and sharing what has been learned. The following are among the issues associated with inquiry-based staff development: time, trust, support, and expectations. (An annotated bibliography of 19 print resources about staff development and a list of 5 resource organizations are included.) (MN)

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# Adult Literacy Staff Development
# Trends and Issues Alerts

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

TRENDS AND ISSUES ALERTS

by Susan Imel
1995

# Adult Literacy Staff Development

The passage of the National Literacy Act of 1991 provided the funding and the opportunity to begin building an adult literacy staff development infrastructure. The act required that each state increase its staff development funding by 5% (from 10 to 15%), and "no fewer than 53 states and territories implemented new training activities through 1992 and 1993 as a result of this act" (Quigley 1995, p. 61). Among these training activities can be detected some exciting new trends in staff development. Probably the most prominent is the movement toward inquiry-based models of staff development in which practitioners improve their own practice through reading, sharing, observing, and critically reflecting (Crandall 1994). Although teacher research is the best known method of inquiry-based staff development, it also involves other practices, all grounded in teachers' knowledge and teachers' questions (Fingeret and Cockley 1992).

Inquiry-based staff development grows out of a number of themes found in the literature on staff development in adult basic education (ABE) and in public schools including the following (Fingeret 1992, pp. 23-24):

- The need for a critical perspective
- The need to problematize the knowledge base in adult literacy
- The need for staff development to be practiced as an ongoing process, generated by teachers and making use of resources in the environment
- The need for community
- The need for a focus on program improvement

Inquiry-based staff development involves a number of steps: problem identification through reflecting on practice; gathering information; studying the information through analysis, critique, and interpretation; planning an action to be taken; implementing the action plan; monitoring and evaluating the changes that take place as a result; and sharing what has been learned (Drennon 1994c). Some issues associated with inquiry-based staff development include the following (ibid.):

- **Time.** Inquiry-based staff development is supposed to be embedded in rather than added onto practice, but concern has been expressed that practitioners need additional time to engage in the steps.
- **Trust.** If practitioners are expected to make public the problem areas of their work, trust must be created among teachers and between teachers and administrators.
- **Support.** Administrators must sustain the inquiry process, especially as it relates to supporting program-level innovations through the adoption of new ideas.
- **Expectations.** Closely related to the issue of support is the one of building up practitioner expectations for changes that will occur as a result of inquiry-based projects. If policy-level changes do not occur, practitioners may become discouraged and further disenfranchised.

Unfortunately, the recent support for additional adult literacy staff development efforts may be lost as a part of the 104th Congress' efforts to streamline government. What will not be lost, however, is the knowledge and experience that have been acquired through efforts to develop and implement staff development programs that are more consistent with the theory and philosophy underlying adult education. The resources listed here can be consulted for more information on recent trends in adult literacy staff development.

## Print Resources

Barauski, S., comp. ***The Staff Development Process. Part One: The Needs Assessment Process. Illinois State Capacity Building for Adult Literacy Staff Development Project.*** Des Plaines, IL: Adult Learning Resource Center, 1995.

Reports on the efforts to create a statewide interagency staff development system for Illinois; explains a 5-step needs assessment process involved in implementing the plan.

Beckett, D. "Doing Things for the Right Reasons: Professional Knowledge for Adult Educators." ***Australian Journal of Adult and Community Education*** 34, no. 2 (July 1994): 104-111.

Rather than the prevailing concept of the adult educator as "facilitator," the author argues for an emphasis on practical knowledge (or "know-how") that regards adult educators' activities as shaped by creativity, reflection, and rationality.

Carter, P. P. "Take Charge of Your Professional Development through Critical Self-Awareness." ***Journal of Adult Education*** 23, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 2-7.

Focuses on professional development approaches, strategies and critical reflection techniques, from the perspective of andragogy rather than pedagogy.

Crandall, J. ***Creating a Professional Workforce in Adult ESL Literacy. ERIC Digest.*** Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Literacy Education, 1994. (ED 369 308)

Explores three promising models for supporting the credentialing processing of adult English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teachers and recommends a combination of the three models.

Crew, E. D., et. al. ***Adult Literacy Leadership Training Project Phase II. Volume II: Fundamental Considerations in the Conceptualization and Design of Adult Literacy Staff Development and Training.*** Tallahassee: Florida State University, [1991]. (ED 367 777)

Contains considerations and guidelines essential for an effective, comprehensive staff development and training program; includes information on nontraditional approaches to staff development and training and steps in the transfer of learning.

***Developing a Plan for Effective ABE/ESL Staff Development.*** Des Plaines, IL: Adult Learning Resource Center; Washington, DC: Pelavin Associates; San Francisco, CA: San Francisco State University, 1994. (ED 373 595)

Based on an earlier study of approaches to training ESL and ABE instructors, this report draws implications and makes recommendations for delivering effective staff development.

Drennon, C. ***Inquiry and Action: A Plan for Adult Education Staff and Professional Development in Virginia. Revised.*** Richmond: Virginia Commonwealth University, 1994a. (ED 371 236)

Presents a conceptual and structural framework for adult education staff development in Virginia, based on 2 years of a staff development study. Profiled are the various support mechanisms proposed and the guiding philosophy of inquiry-based staff development.

Drennon, C. ***Inquiry and Action: Implementation Guide for Program Administrators and Staff Development Facilitators.*** Richmond: Virginia Commonwealth University, 1994b. (ED 371 237)

Includes procedures, guidelines and recommendations for successful administration of inquiry-based staff development programs and provides tools staff development facilitators can use to assist practitioners in developing and carrying out inquiry projects.

Drennon, C. ***Adult Literacy Practitioners as Researchers. ERIC Digest.*** Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Literacy Education, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1994c. (ED 372 663)

Examines the thinking that underlies practitioner inquiry, explains the phases of an inquiry process, gives examples of projects, and suggests changes that must take place if inquiry is to be implemented viably as a staff development process.

Fingeret, H. A. ***Adult Literacy Education: Current and Future Directions. An Update. Information Series No. 355.*** Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1992. (ED 354 391)

In the context of the issue of developing and supporting the literacy work force, discusses the emerging inquiry-based theoretical model, suggesting it is consistent with viewing literacy as practices and critical reflection and action.

Fingeret, H. A., and Cockley, S. ***Teachers Learning: An Evaluation of ABE Staff Development in Virginia.*** Dayton: Virginia Adult Educators Research Network, 1992. (ED 356 406)

Evaluates the extent to which Virginia's current staff development mechanisms meet ABE teachers' needs for skill and knowledge development. Recommends the development of a system of staff development.

Hemphill, D. F. "Making Sense to Teachers about Teaching." ***Adult Learning*** 1, no. 7 (May 1990): 15-18.

Presents elements used to improve adult basic education instructors' teaching process.

Lytle, S. L. et al. ***Developing the Professional Workforce for Adult Literacy Education. Policy Brief.*** Philadelphia, PA: National Center for Adult Literacy, 1992. (ED 355 387)

Presented at the Literacy Policy Forum, this paper describes needed directions for developing the adult literacy professional work force. Advocates the use of practitioner inquiry as a means for generating knowledge from a field-based perspective.

Lytle, S. L.; Belzer, A.; and Reumann, R. ***Initiating Practitioner Inquiry: Adult Literacy Teachers, Tutors, and Administrators Research Their Practice.*** Philadelphia, PA: National Center on Adult Literacy, 1993. (ED 364 749)

Describes the process of inquiry-centered staff development in adult literacy using the experiences of the Adult Literacy Practitioner Inquiry Project.

Pates, A., and Fingeret, H. A. ***Innovative Training Practices: Practitioner Research as Staff Development.*** Durham, NC: Literacy South, 1994.

Reports on 9 research projects conducted by 12 adult literacy practitioners with Literacy South; the focus of the project was to engage literacy practitioners in self-directed research that generated staff training and development.

Quigley, B. A. "Action Research for Professional Development and Policy Formation in Literacy Education." ***PAACE Journal of Lifelong Learning*** 4 (1995): 61-69.

Reviews staff development activities instituted as a part of the National Literacy Act of 1991 and argues for the development of more projects based on action research principles Outlines steps in action research.

Shore, S. "Professional Development Needs of ALBE Teachers Working in Changing Contexts." Paper presented at the Annual Professional Development Workshops for Adult Literacy and Basic Education Workers, Melbourne, Vietoria, Australia, February 1993. (ED 362 666)

Professional development programs for adult literacy and basic education teachers need to address three issues: the practicalities of teaching critical literacy, the means by which teachers advocate for change within their organization, and the kinds of organizations that will best provide teachers with an effective resource base for teaching critical literacy.

Sparks, D. "A Paradigm Shift in Staff Development." ***ERIC Review*** 3, no. 3 (Winter 1995): 2-4.

Reviews how results-driven education, systems thinking, and constructivism are producing significant changes in how staff development is conceived and implemented.

***The Year in Review. Volume 2: 1992-1993.*** and ***The Year in Review. Volume 3: 1993-1994. Reports of Research Conducted by Adult Education Practitioner-Researchers from Virginia.*** Dayton: Virginia Adult Educators Research Network. (Volume 2, 1993, ED 372 237); (Volume 3, 1994, ED 275 302).

Both of these volumes contain reports of practitioner research projects that were instituted as a result of Virginia's inquiry-based staff development efforts.

## Resource Organizations

Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse for ESL Literacy Education, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037-0037; (202) 429-9292, ext. 200. Internet: ncle@cal.org

ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1090; (800) 848-4815, ext. 4-7686. Internet: ericacve@magnus.acs.ohio-state.edu

Literacy South, Snow Building, Room 202, 331 West Main Street, Durham, NC 27701; (919) 682-8108.

National Center on Adult Literacy, University of Pennsylvania, 3910 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104-3111; (215) 898-2100. Internet: ncal@literacy.upenn.edu

Virginia Adult Educators Research Network, P.O. Box 10, Dayton, VA 22821; (703) 879-2732.

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